Do you have an assignment to make a timeline? Start by picking a topic to study, then conduct research to find out more about important dates that occurred during the time period you want to examine. Take it a step further by creating an interesting visual representation of the chronology you laid out. Read on for more information on how to make a timeline.

[[Category:History]]

== Steps ==

===Deciding What the Timeline Will Include===

#Give your timeline a title. What subject is inspiring your timeline project? Decide what general topic you want to illustrate in timeline format. You can focus on a single lifetime or an entire social movement, the history of a neighborhood or the history of a presidency. A timeline can even map out the seemingly simple life of a tree, or the proceedings of one memorable season. Here are some sample titles for inspiration:[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 1.jpg|center]]

#*The Life and Times of Nelson Mandela

#*Beverly Hills, 90210: A Recent History

#*JD Salinger's Storied Career

#*Dragons, Then and Now

#*California's Ancient Redwoods

#*NASA, to the Moon and Beyond

#*The Justin Timberlake Story

#*A Day in the Life of a Praying Mantis

#Make a list of events to include. The events you choose to include on your timeline can take it from a humdrum list of well-known social studies facts to an insightful, inspiring, and even humorous take on the subject at hand. Plan to include significant events, like births and deaths, but mix in some little-known details as well. Include information that's going to resonate with people. You can include as few or as many events as you'd like. Here are some examples of the types of events to include:[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 2.jpg|center]]

#*Personal events of significance like births, deaths, marriages, divorces, major illnesses, breaks with family, moves abroad, big career moves, and so on.

#*Other events that help to craft the story of your subject. For example, if you were creating a timeline of the life of an ancient redwood, you might include the date that settlers moved nearby the tree, the date that the trees around this one were cut down for lumber, the date that a forest fire destroyed the surrounding area, and so on. The picture of the redwood's life begins to emerge based on these significant events.

#*Historical events coinciding with the lifespan of the topic you're covering. For example, if you were making a timeline of JD Salinger's career, you might include recognizable events like World War II or the date humans first walked on the moon, so people can reflect on how those events may have affected JD Salinger's work.

#*Little-known intriguing facts that will make your timeline more original. Do research to dig up facts that most people have never read. Look at your subject from a unique angle that other people rarely take.

#Decide when it will begin and end. Technically, your timeline could be infinitely long and wide, stretching back to the beginning of time and encompassing every little thing that has happened. On a practical level you'll have to decide when you want to start the timeline and at what point you want to end it. Choose a manageable number of events to include, too, so your timeline is readable. A timeline should present what you deem to be the most essential information about your subject, and if you include too much content the important parts will be lost. [[Image:Make a Timeline Step 3.jpg|center]]

#*15-20 events is a good number to include for most timelines.

#*You don't always have to start a timeline with a person's birth or end it with his or her death. Get creative with your start and end dates.

#Aim to present a well-rounded history. Learn as much about your timeline topic as you can, so that your timeline accurately reflects what happened. Remember that history is subjective; for every piece of information you include on your timeline, countless bits of history are left out. You, as the historian, are sculpting the story of your subject. It can never be a complete story, but you can do your best to make it as true, and as interesting, as you possibly can with the information you have at your disposal. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind as you finalize the content of your timeline:[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 4.jpg|center]]

#*Don't forget history's underdogs. Present a perspective that's not as famous and mainstream as what you'll find in a typical history book. Are you covering the history of your town? Think about who has lived there for years but rarely gets

mentioned. Are you outlining the evolution of jazz music? There are plenty of musicians who made great contributions but don't usually make the history books.

#*Use a variety of research sources. If you get all your information from one textbook, you aren't going to have enough information to provide a well-rounded history of your subject. Check out online resources, make calls and interview people, go to the library, read essays on the subject, ready autobiographies, read scientific journals, read old newspaper articles, etc.
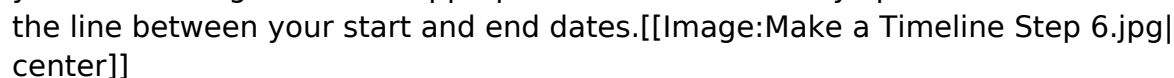
#*Temper your own assumptions. Maybe you think you've already got your subject figured out. You already know the timeline of Columbus' journey to the United States, for example, because you've heard it all before. Look deeper to find out more about what happened in 1492. A routine assignment to present a timeline of a figure you think you already understand is the perfect opportunity to discover something new, and through your own discovery, teach other people, too.

===Laying Out the Timeline===

#Sketch a line on a piece of paper. To get a sense of how your timeline should look, take a large piece of paper and a pencil and draw a sketch. At the far left edge of the paper, draw a vertical hash mark. This is your start date. Draw a straight horizontal line that stretches across the paper and ends with another vertical hash mark on the right side of the page. This is your end date. The rest of the information will fall between these marks.[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 5.jpg|center]]
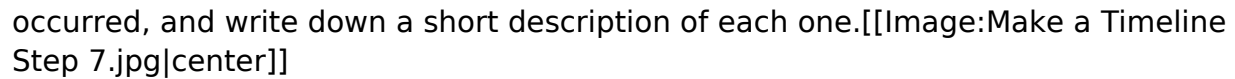
#*Your final timeline does not need to be a straight line, or even a line at all - you can get creative with how it looks. For now, sketch it out this way so you can figure out how all the information will fit.

#*You might want to use a big piece of 11" x 14" paper so you'll have room to plot everything out.

#Decide what time increments to use. Depending on the span of time you're working with, you might choose increments in decades, years, months, or even days. Figure out what makes sense for your subject and the number of events you're including. Make the appropriate number of evenly-spaced hash marks across the line between your start and end dates.[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 6.jpg|center]]

#*If you're chronicling a person's life, having a hash mark every 5 years or so makes sense. If your start date is the person's birth in 1920, and your end date is the person's death in 1990, you could make 14 hash marks across the line.

#Fill in the timeline with events. Go along the line and mark the spots where the events will go. Make darker hash marks to show the years in which the events
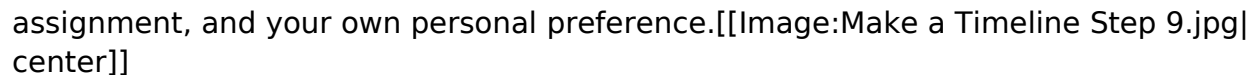
occurred, and write down a short description of each one.[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 7.jpg|center]]

#*Your events don't have to fall exactly on a hash mark; they're just in place to visually mark the passing of time. So if your subject had a major life event in 1956, you could add a longer line or arrow just after the 1955 hash mark to show when the event happened and have it stand out visually from the line.

#*Shorten or lengthen your timeline as necessary. If you notice that a lot of the events are crowded together in the same span of time, consider refocusing the timeline so that it covers a shorter amount of time. For example, if your subject was born in 1879 but nothing of interest happened until 1920, you can skip those years and just start the timeline later.

#Consider creating multiple parallel lines. If you feel there's too much information to include on just one line, you can have multiple timelines that span the same dates, but detail different themes. This way you can compare two lives that occurred at the same time, or the same period in history from two different perspectives.<ref>http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/timeline.html</ref>[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 8.jpg|center]]

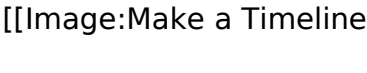===Adding Creative Elements===

#Decide how much description to include. Some timelines have simple event entries, like "2008: Elected president." Others include a paragraph or two of explanatory information that situates each entry in history. How much information you include depends on how much research you conducted, the nature of your assignment, and your own personal preference.[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 9.jpg|center]]

#*If you decide to include longer paragraphs, you'll need to get creative with your presentation, since you won't be able to fit it all on the line. You can write a long paragraph in a box and use an arrow to indicate where it falls on the timeline, for example. Alternate writing information above and below the line.

#*Some timelines have a combination of short entries and longer ones. You might not have much to say about a simple entry on someone's birth, but you could write a longer paragraph on a big career change that happened later.

#Use color and bolded text for emphasis. To help the information you're presenting look interesting and readable, help it pop by using different colors for the main events. You could also use a different font size, bolded text, or make other design changes to create visual interest.<ref>http://timeline.verite.co/</ref>[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 10.jpg|center]]

#Consider including images. You can add visual interest to your timeline with some pictures to go along with the events you're chronicling. Find images online, copy

them from books, or get creative and draw them yourself.[[Image:Make a Timeline Step 11.jpg|center]]

#*If you include images you found online or copied, be sure to include image credits. Note who the artist or photographer is, the date it was produced, and the source of the image.

#*You could also set the entire timeline against a background image. If the timeline is on the history of NASA, you could set it against a space background - you get the picture.

#Finalize the timeline. Now that you have your content and layout organized, it's time to make your final draft. Use good paper or poster board so you have plenty of space. You can create your finished timeline by hand using a nice pen, and markers, or use a computer program to create it and print it out.<ref>http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/teachers/how-to/Pages/creating-timeline.aspx</ref> Either way, work off your sketch as a model.

#*Remember that your timeline can be vertical or horizontal, curved or straight; it doesn't have to be a plain horizontal line.

#*If you're making your timeline by hand, use a ruler to help you make straight lines and hash marks.

#*Do your best to present the information neatly. Don't crowd it too much - the timeline should be readable.

#*Add your title to the page above the timeline. Use bigger, bolder letters so it's immediately apparent what you're covering.

===Sample Timeline===

[[Doc:Timeline]]

== Tips ==

*Try to write small unless you are using a poster.

*If you make a timeline on historical events, research library books, journals, encyclopedias and magazine articles on precise facts and dates.

*Be sure to refer to your sources properly. The general APA-citation style will do for most timelines.

*If you need to, alternate the place you are writing the events. Write the event above the line, then the next one below it.

* Plan out what you're going to put on your timeline before you begin making it, because it is extremely hard to erase any mistakes or add in forgotten events.

== Related wikiHows ==

*[[Study History Independently]]

*[[Be a History Buff]]

== Sources and Citations ==

{{reflist}}

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